

Peck Ranch litigation. The only purpose of the language was to resolve the long-standing dispute regarding the allocation of the repayment responsibilities.

# OPPOSITION TO THE FISCAL YEAR 1997 VA/HUD CONFERENCE REPORT

HON. SPENCER BACHUS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 1996

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I joined 24 of my colleagues in opposing the fiscal year 1997 VA/HUD conference report. I want to be very clear that I strongly support our veterans. I voted for this legislation when the House passed its version earlier this year. But I could not, in good conscience vote for the conference report.

I voted against this bill for one reason and one reason only—this bill hurt some of the accounts most critical to our Nation's veterans. The House Veterans' Affairs Committee worked long and hard to produce a budget that maintained or increased almost every major VA account. Unfortunately, the final conference product cuts the House request of two of the most critical veterans programs while increasing funds for nonveterans programs.

The VA medical care account was cut by \$55 million over the House-passed version. As the VA struggles to offer consistent quality medical care to veterans, I am angry that these dollars are being spent by Americorps—a paid volunteer program which received \$400 million more than the House originally intended. Our veterans heeded the call of our country and risked their lives and their health in true service to the United States. They should not be asked to take a back seat to a program that has been criticized for mismanagement and waste.

The VA medical research account was cut \$15 million from the House passed legislation. Mr. Speaker, in addition VA's premier research efforts in areas such as spinal cord injury and blind rehabilitation, this cut hurts some of our newest and sickest veterans—those who have returned from Operation Desert Storm with bizarre service-connected illnesses ranging from chronic fatigue syndrome to cancer. On the heels of a long-overdue Pentagon admission that some of our troops were exposed to chemical weapons, we are trimming the very dollars that may have been used to improve treatment methods or quality of life for these soldiers.

I am an original cosponsor of a bill introduced by my colleague, the Honorable GLEN BROWDER creating an independent commission to study the use of chemical weapons in the gulf war. We must take the lessons of our sick veterans to ensure that future generations of soldiers are given the best opportunity to perform in an age of chemical warfare and still come home with their health.

The priorities of this conference report are skewed. While I understand that overall VA funding is increased over fiscal year 1996 dollars, I am disappointed that VA's medical mission has been slighted in the process. The wishes of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee should have been given more, not less, consideration.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE SCHOOL OF NURSING, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT BALTIMORE, AND DR. BARBARA R. HELLER

HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 1996

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the School of Nursing, University of Maryland at Baltimore and Dr. Barbara R. Heller, Dean of the School, as it breaks ground on a new building and marks an important milestone in the history of the institution, nursing education and the nursing profession.

The School of Nursing, ranked in the top 10 nationally and one of the largest institutions of nursing education in the country, is in the forefront of nursing education, research and clinical service. Students are provided with the knowledge and skills they need to practice in a dynamically changing, global health care marketplace.

The school targets critical local, State and national problems through research in such areas as the health of mothers and infants, drug abuse, oncology, geriatrics, school/child health, trauma/critical care, community health and AIDS prevention.

Through growing clinical practice initiatives, the school offers vital primary and preventive services throughout Maryland. While enriching the academic experience for many students, these affordable, accessible nurse-managed, community-based health centers served as models of health care delivery to underserved and uninsured populations.

I urge my colleagues to join me in saluting the efforts of the School of Nursing to refocus, redefine and reengineer nursing education. I also congratulate the faculty, students and staff as they break ground on a new facility, building the future of our Nation's health care delivery system through education.

## LEGISLATION TO EXPAND CONDITIONS FOR VETERANS PRESUMED TO BE SERVICE CONNECTED DUE TO EXPOSURE TO IONIZING RADIATION

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 25, 1996

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to address an injustice that should be corrected at our earliest possible opportunity—the poor treatment of our Nation's atomic veterans.

There can be no question that atomic veterans were not adequately informed of the dangers of ionizing radiation and were injured as a result. Many of these men and women have paid for their dedication and bravery with their health and some with their lives. We owe it to them to see that they are not forgotten and that they receive the compensation for all of the illnesses that were incurred because of their service to our Nation. My legislation is but another step in ensuring that we fulfill our duty to them.

Recent developments have made a clear case for providing relief to these vets. The final report of the President's Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experimentation more or less concluded that our Government has failed these brave men and women. The recommendations of the committee mirrored many of the concerns that the atomic veterans groups have had for years: that the list of presumptive diseases contained in law is inadequate, that the standard of proof to meet administrative claims is often impossible to meet, and that these statutes are limited and inequitable in their coverage.

I believe that Congress must provide the necessary leadership to ensure that these veterans' needs are met. My legislation is based on the precedent set by the Marshall Islands Nuclear Claims Tribunal Act, which provides relief for a number of presumptive diseases. Currently, Marshall Islanders receive compensation if they exhibit one or more of the 27 illnesses presumed radiogenic in nature. My legislation would ensure that all of the radiogenic illnesses that Marshall Islanders are compensated for are also on the presumptive list for our Nation's vets. Specifically, it would add bone cancer, cancer of the colon, nonmalignant thyroid nodular disease, parathyroid cancer, ovarian cancer, brain and central nervous system tumors, unexplained bone marrow failure and meningioma to the presumptive list.

This legislation will ensure that atomic veterans are treated properly, not as second-class citizens. It will also ensure that our Nation's policy on addressing the damage done by our Nation's nuclear weapons program is consistent. The least we can do is to make sure that veterans receive compensation for illnesses already determined by our Government to be linked to exposure to ionizing radiation. I urge my colleagues to sponsor this long-overdue legislation.

## CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3666, DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1997

SPEECH OF

HON. ROBERT A. BORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 24, 1996

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3666, the conference report on VA-HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations for fiscal year 1997. I support this bill for many reasons but especially because it includes a provision that requires health insurance companies to cover 48 hours of hospital care for a woman after she gives birth.

Mr. Speaker, my constituent, Mrs. Maureen Drumm is a perfect example of why this practice of drive-through deliveries must be stopped.

On August 31, 1992, Maureen gave birth to her first daughter, Bridget Theresa. Bridget's first twenty-four hours of life were that of a normal, beautiful, healthy baby. However, approximately twenty-hours after Bridget was born, Maureen began to experience severe physical distress. Maureen had developed a